

Meeting Date: January 17, 2008

Agenda Item No. 19

Agenda Item: Land Acquisitions

Approved by: BB

Prepared by Steve Elam and Gregg Servheen

Background:

R3 -Highland Valley Smith Property -This 62.5 acre property is located about ½ mile from the Boise River WMA headquarters with valley bottom and shrub-steppe hillside of critical mule deer winter range. The owner, Mr. Larry Smith, previously sold a portion of the property containing springs and significant wetlands to RMEF (transferred to BLM) that is now part of the WMA. Water from the springs is used to irrigate a few acres of pasture and there is a strip of riparian vegetation. A grove of large poplar trees on the property is the site of a historic stage stop and blacksmith shop. The property was previously presented to the Commission as a life estate project during Executive Session in July 2007. However, it is now proposed as a fee-title acquisition excluding the house and outbuildings based on the desires of the landowner. Costs: Approximately \$6,000/acre in capital costs. PILT is estimated at \$35/year with annual O & M costs estimated at \$500/year.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Land acquisition in accordance with Commission land acquisition policy.

Public Involvement Process:

County commissioners will be notified and asked for their approval prior to closings. The public will be informed and contacted for their input regarding management of the property.

Staff Recommendation:

The Lands Committee recommends proceeding with the acquisitions.

Meeting Date: January 17, 2008

Agenda Item No. 19

Agenda Item: IDL/IDFG Craig Mtn. Land Exchange

Approved by: BB

Prepared by: Katherine Cousins, Jerome Hansen, and Jim White

Background:

The land ownership on the Craig Mountain WMA is mixed between four primary land owners, IDFG, IDL, BLM, and the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT). This mixed ownership increases land management complexities and expenses for the respective management agencies. To seek remedies to some of these management issues, an exchange proposal was discussed with both IDL and the NPT as to their interest and participation in a three-way exchange. The NPT declined to participate in the exchange and so IDFG and IDL have moved forward based on a 2-way exchange.

During executive session in December 2004, the Commission approved initiating an equitable exchange of Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) properties in the Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area (WMA) for Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) endowment properties in the same area for mutual benefit.

Timber cruise, land appraisals and due diligence investigations are now completed. As proposed, IDFG would receive certificate of title to 4,991 acres within Craig Mountain WMA and \$21K which would go back to the Craig Mountain Trust. The Idaho Department of Lands would receive title to 2,866 acres, more or less.

IDFG currently leases 9,547 acres of IDL grazing allotments on Craig Mountain. This exchange will reduce the amount of grazed endowment land under IDFG lease by 3,700 acres, improve access control and ownership, acquire 48 acres of old growth timber, increase streamside property, reduce management complexities, and increase by the potential acres of sensitive plant habitat managed by IDFG. IDL will increase their commercial timber lands by 1,600 acres primarily on the east side of Craig Mountain and reduce by 3,700 acres the amount of land leased for grazing on Craig Mountain. These timbered lands being acquired by IDL are stable slopes away from fish bearing streams that are more easily accessible for timber harvest and log hauling.

The economics of the exchange include an estimated \$12,000 in capital costs to IDFG, a \$2,545/year decrease in grazing lease payments, a \$2,545/year increase in PILT payments, and an increase of \$1,527/year in fire protection payments. All annual costs associated with the property will be paid by the Craig Mountain Trust.

IDL has presented and received approval from the Land Board to proceed with the exchange.

Policy issues: Land acquisition (exchange) in accordance with Commission land acquisition policy. Public access is not expected to change on Craig Mountain because all lands remain in public ownership.

Public Involvement Process: The public is supportive of Department ownership and management on the Craig Mountain WMA. Public open house sessions were conducted in 2007 at the Lewiston IDFG office. County commissioners have been contacted and are supportive of the exchange. The public will be informed and contacted for their input regarding management of the property.

Justification: The exchange will have the following benefits: 1) 1,377 acres in isolated parcels traded to IDL will reduce IDFG management costs; 2) IDFG will acquire 48 acres of old growth ponderosa pine habitats, forgoing harvest by IDL on these lands; 3) IDFG access management of contiguous lands will be improved within the 8,000 acre Captain John watershed; 4) a reduction in administrative costs with maintaining easements and right-of-ways; 5) IDFG will acquire habitats along four miles of Class 1 streams; and 6) IDFG will increase the amount of priority canyon grasslands habitats and our ability to conserve and protect these habitats.

Action Requested: Approval of Commission to complete the land exchange.

Staff Recommendations: The Lands Committee recommends proceeding with the Craig Mountain exchange as proposed.